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FM AMEMBASSY BELMOPAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1825
RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICA COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BELMOPAN 000186

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN (CHRISTOPHER ASHE), WHA/PD (MICHELLE LEE)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KPAO QEXC SCUL BH

SUBJECT: USG FUNDED CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE OPENS

¶1. On May 7, 2009 the Serpon Sugar Mill Archaeological Reserve officially opened. CDA J.A. Diffily and Minister of Tourism Manuel Heredia cut the ribbon to commemorate the event. The event received wide TV coverage. This milestone sees the realization of a restoration project that was made possible through a USD55,000 grant provided 18 months ago through the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. This is the third project in Belize that has benefited from the Fund since it was introduced in the country in 2004. The Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation has provided almost USD150,000 over the past 3 years to Belize to help preserve its priceless cultural heritage sites.

¶2. The Serpon Sugar Mill was established in 1863, marking the introduction of industrialization to Belize. The mill was abandoned in 1910 when sugar production moved to the northern districts of Belize. Through this grant program, Serpon has been resurrected for all Belizeans and visitors to enjoy and learn from. This is the first project funded by the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in Belize which does not focus on preserving the country's Mayan heritage. The funding of this project shows the Embassy's commitment to the diverse elements of Belizean culture and history. The CDA's presence at the ribbon cutting reassured the Belizean Government and people of the commitment of the USG to cultural preservation. Also present at the opening were the Minister of Public Utilities, President of the National Institute of Culture and History, and the Director of Archaeology, as well as several members of the media. Working with these institutions on cultural preservation projects not only benefits the people of Belize, but also improves the image of the Embassy and USG.

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